

CONGRESSMAN GREGORIO KILILI CAMACHO SABLÁN
Statement in Support H.R. 6108, Preserving America's Battlefield Act
House Natural Resource Committee
September 27, 2018

Chairman Bishop, Ranking Member Grijalva,

I am in support of Mr. Hice's bill, H.R. 6018, the Preserving America's Battlefields Act. The bill reauthorizes the Battlefield Land Acquisition Grant Program, a successful matching grants program and increases its authorization to \$20 million a year, including up to \$2 million a year for restoration and interpretation of battlefield sites, helping to turn them in attractive historic tourism destinations.

The Battlefield Land Grants Acquisition Program began in 2002 with enactment of the Civil War Battlefield Preservation Act. The Program was then expanded by Congress in 2014 to include the Revolutionary War and War of 112 battlefields.

This is an important program that provides opportunities for visits to these hallowed grounds that serve as outdoor classrooms and living memorials to those who fought and those whose lives were impacted by war. Visitors gain a greater appreciation of our history and of the sacrifices made to preserve our uniquely American freedoms and way of life.

I would like to see the program expanded again to include the battlefields of World War II. Many Americans are unaware, with the exception of Pearl Harbor, that World War II in the Pacific was fought on what was then, or what is now, American soil. Since the scourge of warfare did not take place in the mainland United States, Americans don't realize that significant battles took place in my district, the Northern Marianas, and

on Guam. These battles are militarily consequential in the defeat of the Axis powers and had devastating consequences for soldiers and civilians alike. Key areas involved in the Battle of Saipan, the Battle of Tinian, the Battles of Guam, and those in Alaska including the Aleutian Islands campaign, like the historic battlegrounds of the Revolutionary War, War of 1812 and the Civil War, should be preserved and established as living classrooms for future generations.

On Saipan, American Memorial Park honors the over 5,000 American and Marianas people who perished during the Marianas Campaign of World War II. The Park's Visitors Center exhibits a film and has diagrams depicting the Battle of Saipan which took place June 19- July 5, 1944. Days later, after a July 24- August 1 battle, the nearby island of Tinian became a significant Allied base with the busiest airfield of the war. Tinian is particularly historically significant and a cultural touchstone when the Enola Gay departed from its airfield to drop the atom bomb. Although the bomb pit has been preserved and there are markings around the island, much more can be done to preserve the area and present it for historical education for generations to come.

In the days to come I look forward to working with Mr. Hice, Members of the Committee, the National Park Service and leading external groups to include World War II sites in this important program.

We can do more to help the people of the Marianas – as well as all Americans and visitors from around the world – learn and understand the significance of what transpired during those dark days of the “Great War” and the tremendous pain and sacrifices made by soldiers and civilians alike.